

28 MAY 1974

USSR: WAR  
50C4-01.2A

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Approved For Release 2005/08/23 : CIA-RDP88-01350R000200830037-3

# Stalin errors excused in new Russian novel

Moscow Bureau of The Sun

Moscow—Another novel, praising Josef V. Stalin is being serialized here as the Soviet leadership continues to rehabilitate the once-denounced dictator.

The new novel, called simply "War," forgives or explains away most of the errors and crimes of Stalin in the 1930's, the years of the worst purges, and the early 1940's at the outset of World War II.

The novelist, Ivan Stadnyuk, a best-selling war writer, argues that Stalin was not responsible for the disastrous setbacks the Soviet Union suffered in the summer of 1941 when Germany broke its pact with Moscow and attacked.

Despite documented historical accounts of an incompetent, befuddled, emotionally upset Stalin who could not cope, Mr. Stadnyuk portrays him as energetic, well-organized and in full command.

The Soviet Union's initial losses, generally attributed to Stalin's lack of preparedness and the early disarray of the Soviet leadership, are blamed wholly on the commander of the Red Army's western Ukrainian front, Gen. D. G. Pavlov, who was executed as a traitor at the front in July, 1941.

## History of purges

Mr. Stadnyuk also wholly rewrites the history of the bloody purges of the 1930's, which were denounced by Nikita S. Khrushchev, Stalin's successor as head of the Communist party, in 1956.

Attempting to portray the "cult of personality," as the Stalinist period is now officially termed, in a sympathetic way, Mr. Stadnyuk suggests that it was lower-level zealots and not Stalin himself who went to excesses.

In one scene, he describes a talk between the dictator and a "German anti-fascist writer" who asks Stalin why his picture is displayed everywhere

Stalin answers—"in jest," according to the account—"What can I do? Peasants are like that. When they love, they love infinitely. When they hate, they go to the barricades."

The portrait, he says, symbolizes the country's efforts "for those ideas for which Stalin, at Lenin's behest, struggles."

That is understandable, the German replies, but has not the use of Stalin's portrait gone too far when it is displayed at an exhibition of Rembrandt paintings?

"Is it really there?" Stalin asked, and he grew gloomy. 'Fools. Among the intelligentsia, there are people who did not join our ranks right away. Some of them now try to prove their devotion to Soviet power with double zeal.'

Other passages of Mr. Stadnyuk's novel, the first portion of which appeared three years ago, echo the reverential tone of the Stalin era in describing the late dictator, who died in 1953.

At one point Stalin is writing his first wartime speech while studying a portrait of himself, and Mr. Stadnyuk writes:

"Yes, in the picture he breathed with immortality. Stalin himself thought that was just how he looked when he sat at his desk with a pen in his hand, writing, looking into the recesses of his own knowledge, freely and generously guiding obedient thoughts, giving them energy, determining new basic principles and connections between comprehensive scientific ideas and practical realities."

Mr. Stadnyuk goes much further in this worshipful account than he did in the first volume or Alexander Chakovski did in his widely read novel, "Blockade," on the siege of Leningrad.

The Stadnyuk novel is being published in the monthly literary journal *Young Guard*, which has a circulation of nearly 600,000, mostly among young people.

Its publication is apparently part of the Kremlin's general

ured rehabilitation, backing away from Khrushchev's denunciations. This campaign has been primarily directed at Soviet youth, in the opinion of many here, because they have no personal memory of the dictator, his bloody purges and his wartime bungling.

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